

14/06/20 First Sunday after Trinity Readings and Commentaries

Prayers

Collect

O God,
the strength of all those who put their trust in you,
mercifully accept our prayers
and, because through the weakness of our mortal nature
we can do no good thing without you,
grant us the help of your grace,
that in the keeping of your commandments
we may please you both in will and deed;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen

Heavenly Father

We pray for the leaders of our nation,
give them the wisdom, understanding and courage,
to lead us toward peace and prosperity for all.
May your faithful Church be a beacon of hope
and truth in an age of fear and deception.
May those who walk your path be leaders to the lost.
Help all your faithful people persevere in the spiritual struggle
against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers
of this present darkness,
and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.
Amen

'Peace be with you'

I hope you are well.

These commentaries are not meant to be a sermon but hopefully a way to expand our engagement with the word of God.

Please continue to love your neighbour and pray for all those who are suffering at this testing time. Prayer cannot be quarantined. Our hope is in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore. Amen.

Regards Revd M Orr

Preliminary Comments:

The Morning Prayer readings this week have contained sections of the books of Joshua and Deuteronomy. The book of Joshua gives information about the Israelites moving into the Promised Land. To some readers it can seem brutal, vengeful, and arbitrary, particularly when they don't view the book in its historic and cultural context, and the context of the book within the bible. (Possibly something our culture today should consider before we run out of statues and erase our history).

The book of Joshua is the sixth book of the Old Testament and follows Deuteronomy. The book records how Joshua, the man who took over from Moses, led the Israelites into the Promised Land. Joshua crosses the river Jordan and prepares the people for battle with the Canaanites who worshiped evil. An important meeting takes place in chapter 5, Joshua meets a strange warrior on his way to Jericho, and asks the warrior 'Are you one of us, or one of our adversaries?' (Jos 5:13). The warrior replies 'Neither; but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.' This short exchange is often overlooked while readers are distracted by the fall of Jericho and the battles for Ai and the conquest of the land that would become Israel. However, one of the lessons that can be drawn from the book of Joshua is that the Israelites learned yet again that God is faithful and fulfils his promises and his people will prosper, but when the people fall short of their obligations then they will fail. Another lesson from the book is that the Canaanites were against God and done what is evil in his sight, God showed mercy to those who turned to him or at least did not oppose God, read the story of Rahab in chapter 2 and about the Gibeonites in Chapter 9. The commander of the Lord's army was not on the side of the Israelites but on the side of faithfulness and obedience to God.

There are many factors to be considered when reading the bible and it is often easy to jump to the wrong conclusion; history, context, the underlying spiritual and moral truths and teachings are important to understand God's message to us. That is why it is important for Christians to investigate scripture to seek the truth and to learn from each other. Just because something is recorded in the bible does not mean that is what the bible teaches. Or to put it another way, the bible records many things, but it teaches only one thing, the way to salvation.

Romans 5:1-8

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. ³And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

⁶For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷Indeed, rarely will anyone die for

a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die.⁸ But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.

Commentary:

Over the course of history, the letter to the Romans has been considered by many scholars, as the most influential of Paul's letters. The letter was written by Paul to give guidance to the Christians in Rome. At the time of writing Paul had not visited Rome. He knows about the church there and has information about some of the difficulties it is facing. Rome was a very large city for the standards of the time and the Christian community was probably spread out in small groups throughout the city. For a variety of reasons, the church was not very well grounded in the gospel or teachings of the faith. Therefore, Paul wrote the letter to lay out some of the fundamental principles of the Christian faith.

Paul covers four main themes in the letter, the righteousness of God and the corruption of humanity, the hope for a new humanity through faith in Christ, the fulfilment of God's promises, and the unity of the Church. Chapter 5 is the start of the section that covers the new humanity, and the justification by faith through Jesus Christ.

Paul uses two significant words in his letter, and it helps to have an understanding of these words, they are, 'righteousness' and 'justification'. These words can sometimes cause confusion. They simultaneously hold legal and spiritual connotations. They can be understood in the following ways.

Righteous, meaning that no charge or complaint can be raised against a person because their actions are completely lawful, they have done nothing wrong.

Justified, a legal charge has been raised against a person, the case has gone to trial, and the case was dropped, not because the person was proven innocent but because another person paid the penalty, therefore justice was fulfilled.

Romans 5:1-8 reads almost like a military training manual or a motivational text on the wall of a gym, 'knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us'. You can almost hear the instructor screaming 'no pain, no gain'! Paul is pointing out to the Christians in Rome, it is through their faith in Christ that they have been justified, because of the grace and love Christ has poured on them, they can face any suffering that comes their way. Suffering may be unavoidable and when it comes, they will learn to rely on Christ and their faith will be strengthened and that is what gives hope. These words of Paul would have been an inspiration to the church in Rome as it faced periods of great adversity.

Christians have always been the bearers of hope in all sorts of adversity over the past two thousand years.

Christians seek the truth, to do God's will, to bring Christ's love to a fearful and lost world. In the past

Christians stood for justice and truth; they faced tyranny, they did not bow down to bullies or support lies.

Matthew 9:35-10:8

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; ³⁸ therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.'

10 Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. ² These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; ³ Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax-collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴ Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

The Mission of the Twelve

⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: 'Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶ but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷ As you go, proclaim the good news, "The kingdom of heaven has come near." ⁸ Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment.

Commentary:

The sending out of the twelve disciples on their first independent missionary journey is also mentioned in Luke 10 and Mark 6.

Throughout the commentaries this week there are some common threads that can be picked out, faithfulness and obedience, endurance, character, and hope. These threads are also running through this text. The Israelites had spent forty years in the wilderness learning to rely on God's promises and to be obedient and faithful, in order to fulfil God's will for them. Likewise, the disciples had spent about three years watching and learning from Jesus, they had listened to his teaching, seen him heal the sick, cast out demons, calm the storm and raise people from death. Jesus had shown his obedience to God and had set the example and now they are being sent out to practice what they have been taught. By doing this Jesus was helping them transition from being faithful students to becoming active disciples. There are many definitions of what a disciple is, this is one that may help; a disciple is someone who is a follower of Christ, who believes his doctrine, rests on his sacrifice, imbibes his spirit, and imitates his example.

When Jesus sent the disciples out, he commissioned them with his authority. It may seem odd that Jesus said

that they were not to go to the Gentiles, this was to fulfil God's promise to the Jews. In God's great plan the gospel is for everyone, but on this occasion, it was to be delivered to the Jews in this particular way.

As Paul indicates in Romans 1:16, 'For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.'

During their mission the disciples would be facing hardship that will result in endurance and build character, by obeying Christ their faith would grow, and all of this brings hope.

In this case 'Hope' is not a wish or a desire for something to come true, it is the assurance, the trust that Christ's grace can be relied upon. Like a climber puts his trust in the rope, that gives him the confidence to climb.

All my hope on God is founded

All my hope on God is founded;
he doth still my trust renew,
me through change and chance he guideth,
only good and only true.
God unknown,
he alone
calls my heart to be his own.

Daily doth the almighty Giver
bounteous gifts on us bestow;
his desire our soul delighteth,
pleasure leads us where we go.
Love doth stand
at his hand;
joy doth wait on his command.

Pride of man and earthly glory,
sword and crown betray his trust;
what with care and toil he buildeth,
tower and temple fall to dust.
But God's power,
hour by hour,
is my temple and my tower.

Still from man to God eternal
sacrifice of praise be done,
high above all praises praising
for the gift of Christ, his Son.
Christ doth call
one and all:
ye who follow shall not fall.

God's great goodness aye endureth,
deep his wisdom, passing thought:
splendor, light and life attend him,
beauty springeth out of naught.
Evermore
from his store
newborn worlds rise and adore.